



## Meet The Team: Kristie Franzmann

*Kristie Franzmann has been with the National Park Service for nearly 20 years. Unlike a lot of NPS staff, who came by way of work with other federal agencies, Kristie's initial job after graduating with a Masters in Landscape Architecture from the University of Illinois was a job at the Denver Service Center (DSC).*

Today, Kristie is a Branch Chief in the Transportation Division at DSC, responsible for the Intermountain and Northeast Regions. "The job is to improve communications with each of the two Regions, and to provide them with better customer service," says Kristie. "Staff from those two Regions can come to me with any projects they've got coming up, and we'll work to make sure the DSC provides the proper services." Kristie noted that these Regions are very different, so they have different things that they need accomplished. "The bottom line is, how can the Regions accomplish their programs, and how can I help," said Kristie.

**Kristie Franzmann is a Branch Chief in the Transportation Division at Denver Service Center (DSC).**



She said that the Denver Service Center operates much like a general contractor on projects. “A lot of the work is now contracted out, but the DSC has started to pull some of the work back in-house as budgets have tightened,” Kristie said. “We’re basically implementation people.”

Kristie’s involvement with National Parks started long before she came to work at the DSC. “My mom loved the parks,” said Kristie. “She was from New York City, from Brooklyn, but I think she had these cowboy fantasies, and she wanted to live in the West. Because of that, my family ended up in Oklahoma.”

“My oldest brother was 11 when I was born,” Kristie said. “He was in the Boy Scouts, and he wanted to go camping, so we started going on camping trips to the National Parks as a family. I kind of grew up in the parks; I loved them.”

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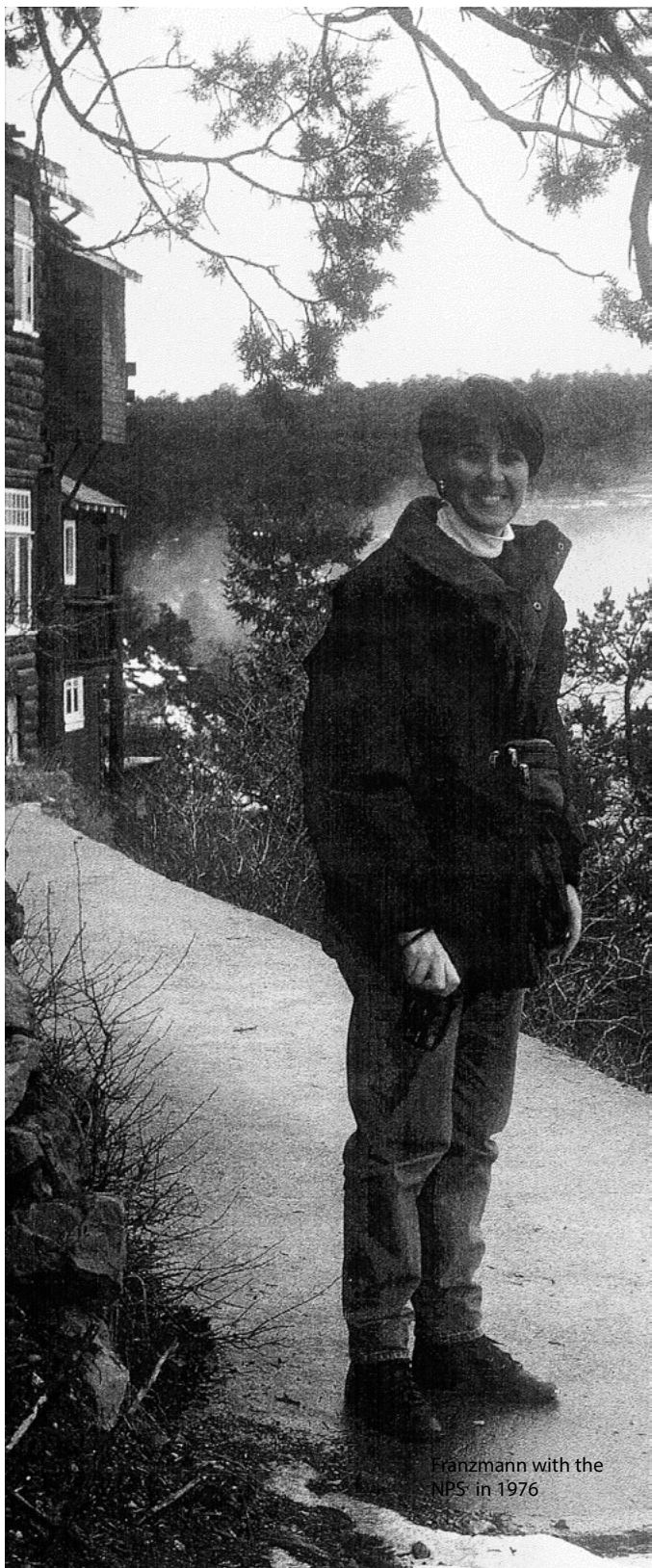
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Kristie said she has three distinct “park memories” from when she was very young, but doesn’t know which one happened first. “I remember sliding on a hill, maybe at Sunset Crater (SUCR) in Arizona; I remember feeding bears at Yellowstone (YELL) out of the car window, and I remember my brothers getting lost at Mesa Verde (MEVE), up in the mountains, and it was dark, and my mom was getting very nervous.”

When Kristie was about 14, the family visited Pipe Springs National Monument in southern Utah, just north of the Arizona Strip country. “I really enjoyed the living history stuff, and I thought, ‘Yeah, this is what I want to do.’ But my father, who was a professor in agricultural economics, told me that I couldn’t work for the Park Service unless I had a forestry degree, and that he considered anyone who majored in forestry as ‘weird.’ So that kind of quashed that dream for the time being. But then it came back around.”

Kristie was born and grew up in the college town of Stillwater, Oklahoma. “When I was in the 8th grade, I decided I wanted to be a landscape architect,” she said. “We had student observers from the local college come through our classes fairly often. I was in art class, and one of the student



Franzmann with the  
NPS in 1976

observers came by my desk and said, ‘Oh are you going to be an artist when you grow up? I’d been in 4H since about the 4th grade, in the horticulture program, so I said ‘No, I’m going to be a horticulturist.’ And the observer replied that her roommate was studying to be a landscape architect, and that would combine horticulture and art.”

Kristie thought that sounded pretty interesting, so from that point forward she just decided she was going to be a landscape architect. “I really didn’t understand what was involved, but when I was a senior in high school, I had the chance to do concurrent enrollment at OSU. I was also considering fashion design, but I really liked the horticulture and landscape architecture courses more.”

Kristie may not have realized it at the time, but she was now on the fast track to a career with the National Park Service. “When I was an undergrad working on a Bachelors in Landscape Architecture at Oklahoma State, I had a professor, Harold Gibbs, who left the University at the same time I graduated. He had been very influential in my decision to go on to graduate school—my goal at that time was to become a teacher at a university.”

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“When I graduated with my Masters from the University of Illinois, I called Harold Gibbs just to say, ‘Hey, guess what, I graduated,’ not really thinking too much about it. It turned out that he had come to work at the Denver Service Center, and he started sending me job openings: out in the Red-woods...all over the place. He ended up hiring me at DSC.”

“When I started, right out of school, I didn’t realize I was being hired into the Roads program. . . I just needed a job. I was working on the Western Team as a landscape architect. I did a lot of parking lot design, and reviewed other plans for Federal Highways as they came up. For a long time I was just doing construction documents.”

Kristie was a designer for about the first 10 years she worked for the NPS. Then, about 10 years ago, she moved into a

project management role. She's been working in the Roads program since 2002 exclusively, and moved into the branch chief manger position about four years ago.

"I love working with the NPS," Kristie said. "It really fits my temperament. I like to solve problems, and I like to help people. And working at DSC, that's what we do. Every day I get to help someone. One good thing is that the NPS mission comes up every day. The people in the Park Service are so dedicated, and everyone really believes in the mission. It's not just a job. I don't think you see that so much in some of the other agencies."

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Kristie said it would be difficult to pick a favorite project of all the ones she's worked on. "One project in the Northeast Region that I'm really pleased with is at Fort Necessity," she said. "That park's previous visitor center had been adjacent to the Fort, but when they built a new visitor center, the entrance road ran between the Fort and the visitor center. This became a safety issue, because all of these school groups were coming to visit the Fort. The kids would go into the visitor center, and then go charging across the park entrance road. The sight distance wasn't very good, and the rangers were seeing near misses every day."

"We realigned the road, and did a stream crossing, which is all stone veneer, and we planted very expensive wildflowers around the realignment. We were able to obliterate the old road trace; you can't even tell it was there. The park sent me photos after it was done, with the wildflowers all in bloom, and it's just beautiful. We really had a good relationship with the park, and it was a great project."

It hasn't been all work. Kristie enjoys being in on a prank. "There was a guy who used to work at DSC named John Freeman," she said. "John worked very closely with Central Federal Lands (CFL) division and they just seemed to be giving him awards like every other day: belt buckles, coats, hats... all this stuff. Bob Gansauer was the engineer with CFL working with John."

"So Bob and I were talking about why it was that John was

always getting these awards. Bob cooked up this idea that we would give John another award, as a joke.”

“At the time, Larry Smith was the Division Engineer at CFL. Larry was a big guy, and his ties would come about half-way down his stomach; they were always a little too short. So Bob pulled out an old woven tie, and cut the end off to make it really short and put a FHWA sticker in it. He wrote this glowing letter on CFL letterhead that said, in part, ‘John, you’re the greatest, and we’re going to give you this “Larry Smith Memorial Necktie” award, blah blah blah.’ Then he faked Larry Smith’s signature on the light table, stuck it in one of those plastic sheet protectors, and sent it over to John’s office.”

‘John had been working out on the Yosemite flood recovery, so when he came back into the office, he said, ‘Hey, look, I just got this award from Federal Highways!’ And he’s going on and on about it, and we realized, ‘Oh, no! He thinks it’s real!’ And here it’s got a faked signature on it! I eventually had to let John know that it was a joke. Larry’s retired now, so I feel safer telling the story.”

Kristie mentions two mentors at the NPS who she feels especially influenced her career. First was Harold Gibbs, her ex-professor and the person who initially hired her at the DSC. “Harold had such an influence on where I headed through school,” says Kristie. “I don’t know that I would be at DSC if not for him. I still stay in touch with him; he’s retired now, and lives in Georgia. He bounced around the NPS for some time, and ended up retiring from Fish and Wildlife.”

Kristie also named Glenn Lamoree, a manager at DSC, as an important mentor. “I worked with him when he was a project manager and I was working in the Line Item program, and he’s just a fantastic project manager,” Kristie said. “I learned so much from him; in fact, I still go talk to him periodically, just to try to gain as much wisdom as I can from him. Glenn is going to retire in the spring, and I’m very sad to lose his experience.”

When she’s not working with Region programs at the DSC, Kristie likes to spend a lot of her time sewing. “I’m no longer designing fashion, but I still do sew, quilt, all kinds of needle-work,” she said. I also like to read, I do genealogy, and I love to travel...in fact, I have lots of hobbies, I just don’t have time to do them all. But if I did find more time, I would probably do more sewing.”